SUMMARY REPORT OF THE

REGIONAL DISTRICT SURVEY COMMITTEE

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1. General Review

This section is a good place to recall that in the beginning, in 1965, the Regional District concept was:

1. Not met with universal enthusiasm despite the unanimous endorsation by the Legislature.

2. Unique to the Canadian Municipal scene.

3. Not based on a publicly expressed need but designed to meet publicly expressed problems:

   (a) Lack of a local governance forum in the 99% of British Columbia then unorganized.

   (b) Difficulty in providing rural services in a structured and cost effective way.

   (c) Centralization problems associated with service delivery only through Victoria.

   (d) Non-existent opportunities for joint service initiatives between adjacent municipalities and between municipalities and their respective fringe area hinterlands.

Before other urgent needs began to be experienced in the 1967 to 1969 period, only 12 Regions had been incorporated and these were largely corporate shells.

The truly significant thrust came between 1967 and 1969. There were three fundamental reasons for this:

1. Hospital Financing was in chaos:

   (a) Large elements of the property taxpayer community did not pay towards the local share of capital costs.

   (b) The big ticket price implication's for hospital capital projects had dawned...gone were the days when these costs could depend upon charity, bake sales, tag days or input from various religious orders.

2. Smaller municipal communities were being fleeced by the financial community for capital financing...it was not unusual for these communities to be forced to sell $100 face value bonds for $75. For the unorganized rural communities the situation was even worse.

3. The provision of centralized rural area community planning was breaking down largely because of non-existent local autonomy input...Victoria was not the place to be exercising total land use control over areas often hundreds of miles away from the people affected.

These three elements served to bring all parts of Province under the Regional umbrella. Thus Regions were given the statutory power for:

1. Hospital Financing.

2. Infrastructure for Municipal Finance Authority.

3. Building Regulations (Rural optional).

4. Community Planning (Rural optional).

Over time items 3 and 4 have been the subject of both minor and major legislative attention; administrative attention between the Ministry and the Regions; political attention both from the public and from the various Ministerial incumbents circa 1972 -1986. Concerns with item 3 will be addressed elsewhere in this report. At this point items 1 and 2 can be described as unqualified success stories although the Regional Hospital District factor is now causing some concern...an issue which the U.B.C.M. is now addressing.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND THE MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSIT ADDRESS EMERGING ISSUES REGARDING REGIONAL HOSPITAL DISTRICTS.

In philosophical terms the original Legislation was also designed to be:

1. Flexible to meet varying needs and aspirations to be found in different parts of the Province.

2. A vehicle permitting Regional Boards to do different functions as between one Board and any other.

3. Accountable to both the Ministry and the Electorate.

Again other parts of this report will comment upon the above. Suffice here to say that item 1 and 2 are still recognizable aspects of the present statute.

Two other factors belong in this section and again can be commented upon further in this Report's other sections.

1. After 20 years the public understanding of the role of Regional Districts is certainly cloudy and often, to put it kindly, imprecise. It is not only the responsibility and authority of the Provincial Government to define that role by way of Statute, it is also the responsibility of Regions to explain to their local electorate WHAT it is they can do and HOW and WHY they have chosen to do the variety of functions the present statute permits them to do...in every way, except for their statutory responsibilities, each Region "has built its own house".

2. Over the years the Provincial Government has diminished its role in servicing and monitoring Regional Districts...the"care and feeding" role of the Province in a precise way was replaced by a series of mixed signals with respect to Regions and public policy up to and including their abolition.

Both of these factors have not helped positive public perceptions to develop about Regions. Indeed some antipathy towards Regions was inevitable. Most regrettably, Regional Boards themselves began to become confused about their future.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE PRECISE ROLE OF REGIONS NOW BE DEFINED BY THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND BE ENUNCIATED AND DEFENDED AS PUBLIC POLICY.

The comments on the two factors above naturally lead into a discussion on the semantics of municipal infrastructure in Canada. Because of Constitutional realities in Canada, local government infrastructure in this country is whatever the Provincial Government designs it to be by way of Statute. The resulting designed apparatus carries upon it whatever statutory authority and responsibilities the Province confers upon it. In addition the Province decides what accountability back to it is required of the designed infrastructure.

In this context, Regional Boards; Improvement Districts; Metro Governments; County Councils; Commissions and indeed Municipal Corporations take the form and have the authority and responsibilities conferred upon them by the Provincial Government involved. Therefore, it is fair to say that what title is conferred upon a local system of governance is to no consequence. What such an instrument of governance does and how its technical machinery is designed to carry out its authority and responsibilities is all that matters.

At the moment for all practical purposes B.C. Regions are designed to carry:

1. Hospital Financing... Statutory

2. Municipal Financing...Statutory

3. Joint Works and Services...Discretionary

4. Local Works and Services...Discretionary

5. Regulatory Services including Community Planning ... Discretionary

6. Such other authority and responsibilities as the Province may confer upon them at their request or might add at its own discretion... Discretionary and Statutory.

Under item 6, for example, only the Capital Region has the function of "Community Health Services" as directed by the Province. "Water Basin" involvement by the three Okanagan Regions was directed by the Province. "Control of Gatherings" was directed by the Province upon all Regions. "Control of Firearms" was a function of discretion and was withdrawn by statutory amendment to become solely a Provincial responsibility.

From this it is clear that Regions in this Province have the role of being whatever the Legislature decides they should be or whatever the Legislature permits them to be. It is also clear that under such a scenario it matters not what title they are given.

Furthermore, should the Legislature decide that other matters or functions are in need of a province-wide local government home it is obvious that the Regional apparatus could serve by whatever title it receives...policing, libraries, community health, air quality control or whatever.

Another matter should be addressed here. When Regions were in the making it became clear that the political players had no political comfort problems with either the Hospital Financing or Municipal Financing concepts involved. Indeed the Hospital Financing proposition was introduced in direct response to grievances presented to the then Government by the U.B.C.M. The Municipal Finance Authority was solely a Provincial initiative and after a pre-selling job on the financial community it was widely accepted by the municipal world except for the City of Vancouver

On the other hand many elements in the municipal community were fearful and suspicious of the new concept.

1. Some felt the Government of the day was bent on using the design to foist on Regions unwanted and or politically difficult existing Provincial responsibilities. Indeed over time some measure of this fear was realized but, again, the movements from Province to Regions required Regional consent and in practice were limited:

   (a) Animal Control...Ministry of Agriculture...8 only accepted to date.

   (b) Firearms Control...Ministry of Environment...16 only accepted and then returned to Ministry of Environment in 1986.

   (c) Weed Control...Ministry of Agriculture...11 only accepted.

   (d) Soil Removal...Ministry of Mines...10 only accepted.

   (e) Home Nursing...Ministry of Health...1 only accepted.

   (f) Pest Control...Ministry of Agriculture...12 only accepted.

   (g) Refuse Disposal...Ministry of Highways...24 only accepted.

   There was never a plan to foist upon Regions unwanted Provincial responsibilities. Those which came about were single initiatives by individual Ministries, sometimes without initial contact with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit...a practice which is not desirable.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED, WHEREVER ANY MINISTRY SEES VALUE IN TRANSFERRING AN EXISTING RESPONSIBILITY TO REGIONS, THAT THE MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSIT BE IN THE PICTURE FROM DAY ONE.

2. Some municipal administrations were jealous of what in their view was an emerging "second tier" of administration, perhaps one leading to greater prestige and clout. At present most of that attitude has disappeared, largely because the realization that Regions are federated mechanisms, of which municipalities are a part, has taken hold. Now cooperation seems to be the accepted order of the day in most Regions. In many cases smaller municipal administrations use Regional Administrations as support and resource personnel.

3. Some felt no need for a "fourth level" of government, forgetting again the federation principle involved and more important the lack of power to tax directly. It is true that some Regions have strayed towards taking on a Governmental stripe, but they are few and all who do are in peril with the people of the Region they serve and with the other levels of Government.

4. Some critics were able to overlook the consent mechanism (individual application for specific powers by way of letters patent) or choice to apply an authority (regulatory by-laws).

This report will recommend no philosophical change in direction with respect to Regions: certainly no change in the federation principle. Regions do have some operational and perception problems but the recommendations set out in this Report will go towards fixing those problems.

The letters patent approach Regions asking for powers and authority by application to the Minister and thence to Executive Council was deliberately designed. Aside from very limited statutory powers, Regions were in effect asked to design their own house, dependent only upon the expressed needs and aspirations of their electorate. The consent process is still very much a fact in the current Act. This Letters Patent process was designed with a number of thoughts in mind:

1. The concept was unique and therefore the Government of the day felt it necessary to permit different solutions to emerge for a variety of problems across a very diversified piece of geography...the Province of British Columbia.

2. The Government wanted to ensure that Regions would be perceived to be creatures of their own design and not a convenient dumping ground for existing Provincial responsibilities (see above comments).

3. The Letters Patent route to authority and powers permitted the Government to have day-to-day monitoring and accountablilty opportunities as the Regions grew.

4. Letters Patent were circumscribed by a variety of external and internal consent processes: Municipal consents; Electoral Area Director consents; petition consents; voter referendums; and last, but never least, Ministerial consents.

5. In the early going, Regions were not thought to be ready to handle a great deal of straight-line statutory authority and powers. The concept needed time for the political players to gain comfort in what was a unique system. Furthermore, in the early going neither experienced, mature nor sophisticated administrative personnel were available. The downside to this factor was the reality that the Letters Patent route is cumbersome: wasteful of now existing talent and energy at the administrative level; and needlessly time consuming and costly measured against the cost of the bureaucracy at both the Ministry and in the Regions.

Therefore, while the Letters Patent process was a necessary feature of the system upon its creation, it no longer makes sense.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE LETTERS PATENT SYSTEM BE REPLACED BY A CLEARLY DEFINED STATUTORY SYSTEM EXCEPT FOR SITUATIONS WHERE A REGION SEEKS SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE POWER OR AUTHORITY BEYOND THOSE SPECIFICALLY CONFERRED BY STATUTE. MEASURES TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE MINISTRY AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CONSENT PROCESS FROM THE REGIONAL ELECTORATE SHOULD ACCOMPANY THE NEW SYSTEM.

Over the years, there have been very few changes to the mechanism sections of the Act dealing with the Regions on the Administrative side, nor on the day-to-day relationships between the Ministry and the Regions. The major changes have come to Legislation involved with Land Use matters. Questions about this area of Regional performance are still very much under Review.

But one change has taken place. The Ministry has drifted away from its "care and feeding" relationship vis-a-vis Regions and the Ministry. Field servicing and educational seminars, for example, have not kept pace with such activities in the earlier going. The result of course has been that Regions, unlike Municipalities, have felt somewhat adrift from the Ministry. This should be changed.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE MINISTRY HAVE SOME DESIGNATED FIELD SERVICE CAPACITY TO REINSTATE THE ORIGINAL "CARE AND FEEDING" ROLE OF THE MINISTRY.

As indicated, the Regional mechanism has seen little change except for the processes and procedures involved with land use. Nevertheless including this survey there have been several reviews of the Regional milieu, and much discussion and varying political signals as to the Regional future. Much of this history has not been useful...some misdirected...some ill-informed...some politically unacceptable or whatever. However, The Farmer Commission on Regions (October 31, 1978) did have some useful points to make, most of which were again not acted upon.

Reasons exist why this became so, which need not be registered here. The main proposition that should be addressed here is quite simple.

The Municipal Act should be the most flexible, accommodating, regularly amendable and have the most enabling flavor of all statutes. This is true because the municipal world is the most changeable and dynamic of all government areas. In British Columbia, this is more the fact because of our fractured and diversified geography. Local Government in this Province can-not be effectively straight-jacketed. Nor should it be. The effective aribiters of what that means are clearly the Ministry and the people out there who have to make any system work. Therefore, beyond what this survey might encourage by way of change, it is clear to this reporter that there exists a constant need for regular Legislative adjustments dealing with Local Government infrastructure and process...Regional Legislation being just one point of focus.

It is therefore remarkable, and quite UNDESIRABLE and UNACCEPTABLE, that despite the best intentions of the original authorities as well as on-going internal qualms by the Ministry that the Regional Division of the Municipal Act should have survived so long. Just as the best thing an architect can do

is to ask the biggest user how to design and what to put in a kitchen, so too must the users of the Municipal Act be asked what to put in their legislative tool box.

Therefore, the main proposition referred to above can have a simple resolution. Twenty years should not go by again without reflective and responsive changes to Municipal Statutes along the way. Regions being the most dynamic area should be emphasized in a new on-going consultative process.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE MINISTRY NOT DEPEND UPON TIME CONSUMING AND SOMETIMES COSTLY EXTERNAL SURVEYS (NOT THIS ONE!) TO ENSURE THE DYNAMICS OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT.

* A REGIONAL MONITORING AND LEGISLATIVE SURVEY COMMITTEE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED CONSISTING OF MINISTRY, U.B.C.M. AND REGIONAL (POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE) REPRESENTATIVES TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGULAR ADJUSTMENTS TO THE MUNICIPAL ACT DIVISIONS DEALING WITH REGIONAL DISTRICT AFFAIRS. SUCH A COMMITTEE MIGHT USEFULLY MEET TWICE A YEAR OR ON CALL AND PRESENT AN ANNUAL REPORT TO THE U.B.C.M. AND THE MINISTER IN SEPTEMBER OF EACH YEAR.

One of the most serious problems facing regions is the lack of understanding by the public of what Regions do for the budget dollar that now comes to them by way of tax requisition. It is a simple problem. For example this reporter often heard around the Province: "Do you know that Region A had a budget of $250,000 in 1975 and it now comes in at $12,000,000 gross?" Most of the time the question has a clear implication that Region A is a bureaucratic monster gone wild. The questioner in fact has the wrong picture by making the mistake of looking only at a gross budget and not the ingredients of the budget. Regional budgets grow by the CONSENT process for functions and services delivered to their electorate. Obviously upon creation day (circa 1965-1967) they had ZERO budgets. Now they have big ticket items. For example Region X breaks down this way:

1. Tax Requisitions for Financing Member Municipality Services....18%
2. Tax Requisitions for Community Health Services....20%
3. Tax Requisitions for Hospitals....27%
4. Tax Requisitions for Sewers.... 15%
5. General Government....4%

Obviously, the above scenario not only takes away the implications involved with the above question but also clearly shows that gross budgets now are the

product of paying for essential services, services which would be difficult or impossible to provide in any other known way.

In this Province, Regional administrative costs measured against gross budget figures are nearly all in the 5% range, with a good many at the level of 2-3%. Unfortunately, many Regions let gross budgets stand without breakdown information such as that shown in the figure. This invites uninformed criticism.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL REGIONS PROVIDE THEIR ELECTORATE WITH MORE PRECISE AND MEANINGFUL BUDGET ANALYSES.

Figure Examples of Effective Budget Presentation

	Gross Budget	Municipal Financing	General Government
East Kootenay	$13,999,562(1985)	72%	4%
Central Okanagan	$ 9,266,433(1984)	67%	1%
Central Fraser Valley	$10,721,112(1983)	85%	1%
Thompson Nicola	$14,885,007(1984)	72%	3%
Peace River Liard	$12,538,879(1983)	47%	10%*
Capital Region	$60,037,219(1986)#		4%

Notes:
* Includes debt.
# Includes hospitals.

As discussed earlier in this report, labels have a lot to do with the semantics involved with the municipal world when all that really matters is: WHAT a given local government infrastructure is permitted to do by STATUTE or CONSENT; HOW it is expected to perform by way of statute and day-to-day Ministry administrative process; and WHY it has whatever task it has in the first place by way of political legislative design. In this context, then, the issue of a separate section of the Municipal Act should be joined in this section of this report.

First of all Regions are Federations...indeed they are joint management mechanisms under our present Act. In this context no notion of separation should be considered in the Municipal Act.

Other jurisdictions have produced needless friction between local governance bodies by statutes creating separate pockets of law for a variety of infrastructure. Thus it is that some Provinces have County vs Municipal glitches....Others have Rural Municipal vs Urban Municipal sore points (more than we do).... Some have "Metro" vs Member Municipality cleavages (Toronto)....Other Provinces, unlike British Columbia, even have separate political organizations to do what the U.B.C.M. does here for all local government.

Therefore, the more all-encompassing the Municipal Act can be made to be, the more it is likely that local governance in British Columbia will be seen to be but one entity taking a number of forms.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE MUNICIPAL ACT BE, WITH RESPECT TO REGIONS, CONTAINED IN ONE DOCUMENT.

To clean up some odd bits and pieces associated with this Review of Regional Districts, this Report will list some points which generally do not belong with the site specific comments to be found in the 28 single reports on the mosaic of the Regional scene as this reporter found it to be.

* This reporter found striking differences between one region and another...surprisingly this was the case even between immediately adjacent Regions. Coming from the school which believes, "people can make most any system work if they really try and can louse any system up if their attitude is negative", the reason for these differences is really obvious. Under the present Act, while all Regions do different things, they all use the same rule book to get the power to do whatever they are doing. Administratively and politically, though, they can be quite different on their approach and attitude towards the Regional System. Some, therefore, have developed Board maturity, administrative and political comfort levels that are impressive. In others words they cooperate within their own House and towards the Ministry to

get their chosen jobs done. Some unfortunately do not or at best are lukewarm.

* After 20 years this reporter was surprised again that the public perception of Regions was often based on misinformation or lack of understanding of what Regions can do and what the Province expected them to do. The reasons for this public perception problem again are quite obvious:

1. Some Regions do not have adequate initiation programs for new Directors.

2. Regions generally are not strong on public relations programs.

3. Some Electoral Area Directors get hived off from their electorate, in part due to limited financial resources to distribute information over very large areas, often with little population.

4. Municipal Directors are too often guilty of poorly advising their Councils of Regional initiatives and affairs.

5. Procedures are presently awkward or unclear as between the Ministry and the Regions.

6. The public can become quite confused if mixed signals on the future validity and value of the Regional System come from either the administrative or representational parts of the Provincial Government. Mixed signals were perceived by this reporter.

The cures for the public perception problem causes listed above will be self-evident to the reader. Particular recommendations need only be made with respect to one.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSIT BE THE "BRIDGING" LINK BETWEEN THE REGIONS AND ALL OTHER MINISTRIES OF GOVERNMENT. THIS WILL ENSURE CLEAR DEFINITION OF THE REGIONAL ROLE THROUGH CONSISTENT PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENTS BY THE PROVINCE. IT WILL PERMIT THE MINISTRY: TO DEFINE PUBLIC POLICY WITH RESPECT TO REGIONS; TO GIVE THEM THE STATUTORY TOOLS TO DO THE THINGS EXPECTED OF THEM BY THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT; AND TO DEFEND THESE CLEAR-CUT POLICY DIRECTIONS IN THE LEGISLATURE AND TO THE PUBLIC.

* Another comment can be made as to the validity of the thought that the major urban Regions (Capital Region and G.V.R.D.) need separate statutory treatment as opposed to the so-called "rural regions". This reporter believes that while they probably will request special purpose powers from time to time, so will other less urban Regions. All of this can be accommodated within a single division of the Municipal Act, as it is now by way of the Letters Patent process. For example, only the G.V.R.D. has a major Air Pollution Control component while Alberni-Clayquot and Fraser-Fort George have relatively minor elements of the same component. No other Regions are now involved with an Air Pollution Control function. Only the Capital Region has the function now of Community Health Services.

* IT IS THEREFORE, RECOMMENDED THAT IN A SINGLE DIVISION OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT ALL REGIONS BE GIVEN THREE ROUTES TO POWER AND AUTHORITY:

1. STATUTORY POWERS FOR WORKS AND SERVICES USING A PROCESS OF REGIONAL ESTABLISHMENT BY-LAWS CIRCUMSCRIBED BY APPROPRIATE CAVEATS.

2. STATUTORY POWER FOR REGULATORY BY-LAWS, WITH MINISTRY APPROVAL FOR BUILDING STANDARDS BY-LAWS TO ENSURE UNIFORMITY AND TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE.

3. OPPORTUNITY TO REQUEST THE MINISTER TO ADVANCE TO CABINET SPECIAL PURPOSE POWERS TO BE CONFERRED BY REGULATION CONSIDERED TO BE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

* Many Regions expressed interest in two other areas: authority for collection and issuance of business licences for non-municipal areas; and the opportunity to conduct Poll-Book elections.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT AUTHORITY BOTH FOR BUSINESS LICENCES AND FOR POLL BOOK ELECTIONS BE ACCOMMODATED WITHIN THE REVISIONS OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT. THE MINISTRY SHOULD ESTABLISH THE UPPER LIMITS OF BUSINESS LICENCE FEES AND CLASSIFICATIONS TO WHICH THEY WOULD APPLY, TOGETHER WITH EXEMPTIONS. POLL BOOK VOTING SHOULD REQUIRE AN APPROPRIATE OATH TAKEN ON VOTING DAY AFFIRMING ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY THE MUNICIPAL ACT. PENALTIES FOR FRAUDULENT VOTING SHOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY HIGH TO DISCOURAGE ABUSE.

The first recommendation would have relatively minor revenue impact and if Regions used Municipal Offices for administrative operations, issuance and

collection would have little administrative cost and would maximize public convenience. The Poll-Book option would permit significant cost savings to all Regions, School Boards and Municipalities.

* Given the current fiscal maturity and sophistication of Regional administrations this reporter found a need for greater flexibility in the financial systems Regions could apply. This involved opportunities and procedures for the initiation and use of reserve capital accounts; "save ahead" opportunities for some proposed capital expenditures approved by the Board; and reserves for extensions to, repairs to or needed replacement of elements in capital structures created under an existing Establishment By-law. All of these could be monitored by the Ministry to prevent excess or abuse

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE MINISTRY OFFER SUGGESTIONS FOR FISCAL FLEXIBILITY TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE ACT WITH RESPECT TO REGIONAL DISTRICTS.

Except for some early versions of pamphlet material dealing with the Regional System printed during the formative years in 1965-1969, the Ministry has no current distributable material dealing with the philosophical or technical side of Regional Districts. Especially lacking is a description of the nature of the unique FEDERATION aspects of the British Columbia version of Regionalism. For this reason some critics have wrongly presumed Regional Districts to be a piece of machinery having strong "Fourth Level Government" overtones. They do of course have some governmental aspects but they are creations which have no authority to tax directly and only in the non-municipal areas are they the product of direct election...two of the main ingredients of Governmental Status.

Regions actually can be best described as the joint managers of functions given to them by the Province or taken on by themselves with Provincial consent and that of their electorate. The clarification of their unique position in the local government scheme of things should be described in a suitable publication. Not many days go by without the Ministry being asked questions about the ROLE, PURPOSE and CHARACTERISTICS of Regional Districts. This is particularly true when it comes to the student population of our Province seeking essay or thesis material and those who teach them at Secondary and Post-secondary Institutions. This situation is a big gap in the

information side of the Ministry. It is a time-consuming job to present such information on a one-on-one basis.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT UPON THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE MUNICIPAL ACT BEING ADOPTED THAT THE MINISTRY PREPARE A COMPLETE PAMPHLET ON THE PURPOSE, PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, ROLE AND CURRENT STATUS OF THE REGIONAL SYSTEM ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SCENE.

In conclusion, one of the interesting things about this reporter's tour of the Regions was to hear the critics. Some of these critics were internal to the system; others were not.

The internal critics largely held to ideas for change to the processes of Regionalism. These were helpful in gathering worthwhile recommendations for change. Some internal critics seemed to be simply disturbers who did not want the system to work for whatever reason and were regarded as such by their colleagues, an opinion shared by this reporter as indicated earlier in this section.

The external critics were normally coming from two directions. Some were coming from ignorance or misconceptions and these were nearly all educatable and thus satisfied. Unfortunately some were simply against government of any kind...period. Little can be done about the latter category of critic. The most important question asked by this reporter of all critics was: "If Regions were wiped out today...what system would you have in place tomorrow morning to do what the various Regions now do"? In other words: "What would replace a cross boundary infractructure or an infractructure for providing works and services to rural benefiting areas"? Literally answers were either non-existent or plain gibberish.

Neverless, having asked the questions this reporter was able to reach a conclusion. The message was: Systems often need review....The name of the game is to FIX the glitches as they develop in the system.

The formula to ensure fix-up success is x + y + z = OK....

x....Clear definition of the Regional Role by the Provincial Government

y....Provide them the Statutory Tools to do the jobs expected of them.

z....Build into the system accountability caveats to the Ministry and the Electorate.

This reporter has tried to make this point in this Survey. No system exists which cannot also benefit from adopting an on-going IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY.

II Overall Impressions...Positive

In this section this reporter will list some of the most memorable impressions gained about Regional Districts from this survey.

* The most memorable impression was the straight forward and forthcoming manner in which the adminstrative and political player elements of the Regional System responded to this Survey. Nowhere was a question ducked nor a piece of requested information denied or hidden. Paralleling this fact was the positive suggestions that were made for change or adjustments.

* Having the memory of less favourable circumstances in the Regional System (1965-72), this reporter was impressed by the maturity and political comfort levels of Regional Boards and the sophistication and professional competence of Regional Administration staffs. Staff morale was high nearly everywhere.

* All regions understood and appreciated the fundamentally important role they played as part of the Municipal Finance Authority fabric as viewed by the investment community.

* Regions took the responsibility of providing "hardware" works and sevices to the non-municipal areas very well. Any concerns addressed awkward, time consuming, inefficient, costly process and not current results.

* The Regions would all welcome more direct field contact with their Ministry...a clear indication that they view the Ministry as a source for information and educational opportunities and not merely an enforcement centre.

* The Regions carried out the role of "hardware" cross-boundary works and servicing well.

* Most Regions did not involve themselves with frictional entries into jurisdictional areas already occupied by other levels of Government nor their Agencies.

* All Regions had addressed the issue of restraint in a responsible manner...many making significant cut-backs to staffing levels.

* No region was guilty of the often heard charge that the political part of the apparatus was at the public trough on the remuneration side.

* While there was still some expressed concern about the dominance of municipalities vs rural areas, this was most often unjustified, and where existing often the result of paranoia vs reality and certainly greatly diminished over that existing during the formative years of Regional Districts.

* Many electoral area directors felt Regional Board meetings were forum opportunities for the rural hinterlands to bring forward to a more recognized and prestigious body concerns expressed in their communities.

* Some municipalities clearly are relatively both vote dominant and cost contribution dominant in their respective Regions and have handled that responsibility with admiral restraint and responsibility. It is appropriate that they deserve to be named. Other municipalities are relatively neither cost nor vote dominant. To accentuate the positive and ignore the very few discomfort situations the following municipalities making honorable mention are:

1. Port Alberni
2. Kelowna
3. Cranbrook
4. Prince George
5. Vancouver
6. Nanaimo
7. Vernon
8. Penticton
9. Powell River
10. Kamloops
11. Campbell River

These municipalities alone represent 762,338 people on the 1981 census. Many other municipalities do honorable jobs in their fundamental role as the major building blocks of the Regional System. This then represents the positive side of the system. It is not a shabby picture.

III Overall Impressions...Negative

Having put the positive side of the Regional System, this section will now turn to the negative side. While on balance there exists a more positive than negative flavor running through the system, some elements on the negative side nevertheless bear mention.

* Municipalities are the corner posts of the regional system. The bigger ones by definition pay significant requisitions to the General Government account. Most, to their credit, have no comfort problems with this reality. Some do have problems, reasons being:

1. They do not recognize that the General Government requisition is usually much below 1% of their total internal Municipal Budgetary outlay.

2. Many with a comfort problem simply do not give recognition to the fact that their seat at the Regional table has saved them many thousands in $ fiscal charges for both Municipal and Hospital Financing. To achieve the same results outside the current fabric of Regionalism, someone would have to re-invent a wheel other than the one now existing. Certainly they could not enjoy, acting independently, the savings they now enjoy.

3. Finally some municipalities' assessment levels are the direct result of activities and developments in their rural hinterlands and in that sense are quite legitimate and hardly unfair. Their requisition is really their proportion of the overall regional property assessment and thus for general overhead should be considered as the tax base belonging to all parts of the Region.

* There are some very good examples of ways whereby contracting back and forth for various administrative tasks and local works and services between Regions and various other local governance bodies has occurred. North Okanagan, for example, has a good system for taking contracts for building inspection and planning services for member clients. Indeed, North Okanagan provided the administration for the Okanagan Water Basin Board servicing two other Regions. There were cost savings to be had here. Some smaller communities cannot alone afford the professional competence or the economies of scale open to the Region.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL REGIONS EXAMINE ALL OPTIONS FOR CONTRACTS WITHIN THEIR REGION: ALL IT TAKES IS THE USE OF A LITTLE MORE IMAGINATION.

* Recreation, facilities or operating, are big ticket items. Municipal and non-municipal areas should share the cost of such services especially if the situation involves a municipality and a significantly populated fringe area. Approaching a recreational need on a cross-boundary basis must be carefully handled.

The issue involves fairness and equity factors between the participants in the enterprise: patterns of use; location; distances from the facility related to convenience for use; functions provided...all must be evaluated when considering a sharing formula.

In some cases not enough imagination has gone into sharing formula construction to ensure non-municipal area participation. Sharing formula variables to recognize the distance-from-the-facility issue can be constructed, making more likely rural electoral area support. In some cases municipalities have "gone it alone" in building a facility only to come "after the event" to seek cross-boundary fiscal support for the facilities. Often their plea is ignored by people who played no role in the original planning. It takes time and cooperative effort to get the issue back to FAIRNESS AND EQUITY.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL REGIONS TRY TO ACHIEVE "FAIRNESS AND EQUITY" FOR THE COST SHARING OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WHEREVER A PATTERN OF USE BY NON-PAYING AREA POPULATIONS CAN BE ESTABLISHED.

* For sure, the most important desks in a Regional Operation are those dealing with REGULATIONS imposed by Board By-Laws. Be they the desks dealing with Building Inspection By-Laws or Land Use By-Laws they offer up opportunities for being either "help centres" or "ham handed" enforcement centres.

This reporter found no difficulty in walking into Regional Offices and finding what modus operandi and climate was in place. Municipalities have had the experiences of nearly a century to learn that the regulation of property is the most politically sensitive of all their areas of responsibility. So it is with Regions...often with the added reality that the Regional Office is sometimes far distant removed from the scene of regulatory conflict.

The key is for Regulatory officers to be helpful and if possible accommodating to show people how to get by regulatory prohibitions by telling them how to get something done or changed so that it can be done. Taking the view that the regulatory enforcement officer "knows best" and can offer no solutions for solving a problem is not a good way to go. Friction is the inevitable result.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL REGIONAL BOARDS REVIEW THE CLIMATE IN PLACE AROUND ALL REGULATORY DESKS. THIS REPORTER RECOGNIZES THAT PERSONALITIES OF SOME REGULATORY PERSONNEL PROBABLY LENDS ITSELF TO CONFLICT BUT THIS IS A CORRECTABLE FINDING.

* The Regional District System is really a very simple concept but using the current system of letters patent and supplementary letters patent to provide the machinery for their operations has brought a complexity to the system which is clearly wasteful and unnecessary.

Including the problems associated with Regions exercising their regulatory powers, mentioned above, the complexity of process brought the most critical comment from those who try to make the system work. One Region, for example, has 112 separate folios for functions performed. A new director is often overwhelmed by the need to get a handle on the amount of paper work involved with such a scenario. Even the senior administration has problems with the complexity of paper flow. Even simple amendment procedures for existing functions are painful to both the Region and the Ministry.

It was obvious to this reporter that SIMPLICITY OF CONCEPT should be married with SIMPLICITY OF PROCESS to eliminate this much deserved negative criticism. This would mean that significant cost and time savings could be achieved within both the Ministry and the Regions.

* Finally, on the negative front, this reporter was not asked to take particular regard as to how the capital hospital financing role of Regional Districts fitted into the system in meaningful ways. For most Regions the local share of capital financing is largely a "rubber stamping" process. Some Regions do have more interplay between the Regional Board, the local hospital world and the Ministry of Health when it comes to hospital needs or the local share capital share for structure or equipment.

In the G.V.R.D. and C.R.D. there is quite sophisticated interplay between the Regional Board, the Ministry of Health and the various hospital bodies within the Region. Some other Regions have some measure of that interplay. Others have little or none. In other words the system in place is not consistent across the Province.

Nevertheless, in terms of the taxpayer it is a fair and equitable system in that every taxpayer pays a share through the instrument of their respective Regional Hospital Board, i.e. the Regional Board...being one and the same. This reporter, as indicated earlier, would simply like to deliver the message that all is not well with the processes involved as between some Regional Hospital District Boards and other elements in the Hospital decision making machinery...NOT with the fairness and equity side of Hospital Financing. This situation deserves a look. No Board can be expected to be just a "rubber stamp". The criticism heard was in effect a plea for more meaningful interplay.

IV Major Legislative Deficiencies

This section will list areas for legislative change or fix-up. Earlier sections have covered some of the reasons for these suggestions by way of descriptive preambles on problems perceived by this reporter.

1. Statutory power in specific areas is needed for clear definition of the Regional Role. This would permit a procedure whereby Regions would still take certain local works and service powers by choice and certain regulatory powers by choice, i.e. adoption of Establishment By-Laws. Caveats to these powers would be applied by the Ministry either by Statute or through administrative policy direction.

2. The Province could assign power or authority to a Region where public policy determined such action to be desirable. The Region could request special circumstance power or authority through the Minister with final disposition of such requests going to the Executive Council upon the recommendation of the Minister.

3. Once existing, Establishment By-Laws to permit the exercise of power or authority would be amendable through simplicity of process.

4. Existing powers and authority would stay in place.

5. Boundaries of Regions, external and internal, could be adjusted through process initiated by the Minister or the Region and approved by Executive Order. The present process is largely inoperable.

6. Voting Procedures of boards would be clarified to ensure that weighted votes would apply specifically to:

   (a) General Government and Legislation...Overhead.
   (b) Hospital Capital Budget.
   (c) Access to Municipal Finance Authority.
   (d) Borrowing outside MFA in excess of $100,000.
   (e) Application for the assumption of new power or authority.

   The one-director-one-vote principle would apply on all other issues before the Board except for instances where Establishment By-Laws determined

otherwise. Votes on Benefitting Area matters would be as set forth in the Establishment By-Laws or by only participating members on the one-vote principle.

7. Regions should have a wide range of options for using variable tools for electoral approvals: mail ballots; petition and counter petition processes; director approvals; director overides by the Board; varying methods for benefitting area participant consents. The use of some of these options could be overidden by the Ministry if an issue of fairness and equity became apparent.

8. Regions should have simplicity of process, now often clumsy or inoperable, for changes involved with:

   (a) Changing boundaries of Benefitting areas.
   (b) Changing sharing formulas often set long ago under different circumstances with different players at the Board table.
   (c) Eliminating power or authority assumed long ago but now unwanted, not needed or inoperable.

9. Explicit procedures for dealing with cross-references to other sections of the Municipal Act are needed.

10. Remuneration options should be authorized by statute to reflect the varying needs of various parts of the Province.

11. Fiscal sections of Part 24 should be opened up to permit financial management akin to that open to Municipalities under caveats applied by the Inspector of Municipalities.

12. Technical adjustments are required to meet legally challenged current procedures and statutory provisions. Clarity and precise drafting intent is needed.

13. Legislation should clearly provide that the Provincial interest is defined as:

   (a) Fiscal accountability to the Ministry...which primarily involves debt management.
   (b) Issues involved with constitutional matters: Structure; Boundaries;

Uniformity of Procedures for dealing with the Ministry; Adoption of Special Powers.

(c) Conflicts between Regional activity and Provincial jurisdiction or policy which might need specific overide provisions.

14. Provision should be made for an appeal procedure to monitor the existence or otherwise of impartial administration.

15. Establishing clear statutory provisions for notice to the electorate, hearings, counter petition responsibility requirements and disposition of such petitions is warranted.

16. Flexible enabling provisions are needed for meeting the differing design requirements that could apply to relatively large parts of existing Regions:

(a) Fort Nelson and area north of 58 parallel.

(b) Queen Charlottes.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED, IF MOVES ARE MADE TO DESIGN UNIQUE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES FOR SPECIAL AREAS, THAT CHANGES NOT BE MADE TO EXISTING HOSPITAL DISTRICT STRUCTURE.

17. As Archie Bunker once said, "If it works, don't fix it." The counter to that advice is equally wise. The current provisions of the Act which purport to provide a greater measure of representation to some rural communities short of municipal incorporation have not been a hit. Only <u>three</u> rural communities have adopted to broaden their representation under present provisions...Coal Harbour, Fort Fraser and Bear Lake.

What is needed are statutory changes to encourage some rural communities to have different designs to give them more local input into local works and services issues together with regulatory issues than they now get through their Electoral Area Director. The communities would in effect elect quasi- "Municipal Councils" who could give advice through their Electoral Area Director to the Regional Board. The designs possible would fall far short of Municipal Incorporation.

At the present time 2,320,949 people live within municipal areas served by Regional Districts. Fully 424,607 people live in rural British Columbia, many of them widely scattered. Some rural population however is pocketed into quite recognizable boundaries: Cawston, Okanagan Falls, Okanagan Landing, Falkland, Winfield, Thornhill, Bowen Island, Riondel, Ganges Harbour and Sicamous to name a few examples.

Each of these communities could have different designs and be doing different things. The proposed new provisions of the Act should be flexible enough to accommodate such differences.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE ACT BE AMENDED TO DEAL WITH RURAL REPRESENTATION CONCERNS WHICH HAVE ALL BEEN DISCUSSED BY THE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE AND AT REGIONAL FORUMS. IN ADDITION, THE COST OF SPECIAL ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGNS SHOULD BE BORN BY THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED. HOWEVER, THE MINISTRY SHOULD CONSIDER SOME GRANT TOWARDS ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS ON A MODEST SCALE...SAY $2,500 PER COMMUNITY.

Some of these communities may move to Municipal Incorporation over time. The amount of taxes now collected under the Taxation (Rural Area) Act may be enough to make such a move attractive and economic. Others may find municipal status totally impossible. Nevertheless the Ministry should actively encourage incorporation where studies prove such a move to be attractive.

* IT IS FURTHER RECOMMENDED THAT IT BE MANDATORY THAT, 5 YEARS AFTER ASSUMING LOCAL COMMUNITY STATUS, THE MINISTRY SHOULD UNDERTAKE A STUDY OF THE SITUATION. IF A CASE FOR INCORPORATION SHOWS UP, THE ISSUE SHOULD BE PUT TO A VOTE IN THAT COMMUNITY. ANY COMMUNITY COULD SEEK A VOTE AT ANYTIME BY PETITION TO THE MINISTER.

18. Many Regions supply electoral services to School Boards. Municipalities do the same. The introduction of Poll Book Elections for all these Bodies could result in great savings.

19. Regions should have powers incidental or supportive of any assigned power, one created under an Establishment By-Law or one sought and assented to by Executive Order upon the recommendation of the Minister.

20. The Minister should have flexibility to permit Regions to exercise powers related to disposal of assets. Indeed the Minister should have the power to confer different authority for the differing needs of differing Regions.

21. Electoral Area Directors should have the right to a small budget allocation for the purposes incidental to the discharge of their duties in sometimes very large rural areas. Such budgets should be exclusive of remuneration and travelling expenses. Records should be presented to the Board annually by each Director to monitor any possible mis-use or misdirection of any outlays.

V Notes for the Regions

This Report reflects the conclusions of the author that Regions generally have performed well. Where they have not performed as well as they should have, this Report has made appropriate comment.

Some of the performances, excellent, good, fair or indifferent, are the result of both internal and external forces. This list will put in one section a summary of those forces:

1. Legislation amendments have not kept pace with present needs, nor changing circumstances, both legal and fiscal.

2. Public policy definition of the role Regions are expected to perform needs precise and defendable presentation.

3. A hands-on relationship between the Ministry and the Regions needs restoration and renewal.

4. Informational material about Regions available for public consumption has been weak or non-existent. Here the Regions and the Ministry could work on closing this "Information Gap".

5. Regions have not totally solved political comfort problems between parts of urban and rural British Columbia.

6. Stability of Ministry political leadership has been transient.

7. Some Regions have taken on functions or activities of questionable validity...Marinas, for example.

8. Regions were the focus of blame for actions taken by other elements within the Governmental System...Health, Highways, Environment and Agricultural Land Commission, for example.

9. Major population Fringe Areas cannot continue to use Regions, who can do things for them, as convenient escape hatches for avoiding choices...separate incorporations (over time, such a choice is almost always uneconomic)...or phase-in annexation with an adjacent municipality...almost always such a choice is the best over time:

(a) More productive and economic results ensue for the planning for the extension of local works and services.

(b) The people involved, socially, consider themselves part of the greater local community but the will to politicize that viewpoint is often lacking.

(c) Regions tend to do local works and services for major fringe areas on a site specific, current cost basis with often little regard for the real needs of building ahead.

(d) "Big is not always Best", but ultimately the economies of scale do count.

The Fringe Area force factor and its implications for the Regional System is very much a force factor in the future of Regionalism. Amalgamation with neighbours, to achieve a Common Good, should be a force measured on the positive side and not on the "them" and "us" side as it often is now.

10. Most of the original forces, which were either fear, petty jealousy or personality clash inspired between Municipal and Regional Administration, is in the twilight stage and is only mentioned here to complete this summary list.

Except for the "Fringe Area" issue all of the forces at play in the Regional System can be modified by either Ministry or Regional Board action or attitude change. The "Fringe Area" issue is more politically difficult. It could of course be removed by Legislative Fiat, but this offends against the consent processes long a part of this Province's local government scene. It might later come to that, but for now...

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THERE BE:

1. RESTRUCTURING PHASE-IN GRANTS TO MUNICIPALITIES TAKING IN FRINGE AREAS.

2. PHASED TAX REGIMES FOR FRINGE AREAS.

3. MORE RELUCTANCE ON THE PART OF REGIONS TO PROVIDE WORKS AND SERVICES TO FRINGE AREAS WHERE MUNICIPALIZATION PROVIDES A BETTER ANSWER.

4. MORE RELUCTANCE ON THE PART OF THE PROVINCE TO PROVIDE GRANTS FOR WORKS AND SERVICES TO FRINGE AREAS ESPECIALLY FOR WATER OR SEWER PROJECTS, AGAIN WHERE MUNICIPALIZATION PROVIDES A BETTER ANSWER OVER THE LONGER TERM.

5. MORE MINISTRY INFORMATION GATHERING STUDIES OF PROBLEM FRINGE AREAS WITH THE INTENT OF PRESENTING ATTRACTIVE MUNICIPALIZATION PACKAGES FOR VOTER ASSENT.

6. MORE TAX INCREASES UNDER THE TAXATION (RURAL AREA) ACT TO MORE DIRECTLY REFLECT PROVINCIAL COSTS FOR ROADS AND POLICING IN THE FRINGE AREAS IN PARTICULAR.

If this incentive package were applied as public policy for handling designated fringe areas, where municipalization would be desirable, results on this fringe area issue would be easier to accomplish. It would not offend against the consent process. It could lead to a situation where Legislative Fiat would never be needed to ensure municipalization.

VI Notes for the Ministry

Threaded through this report, thus far, are various comments on how relationships between the Regional System and the Ministry might be improved. Most of those comments have dealt with issues involved with:

1. Renewal of Legislative content and Role definition for Regions by the Ministry.

2. Improvements to Informational capability of the Ministry.

3. Meaningful, precise, time economic and cost effective administrative accountability procedures between the Ministry and the Regions.

4. Expansion of the Field Servicing capability in the Ministry.

5. Reinforcement for the Inter-Ministry capability and recognition for the recommended BRIDGING role of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit and the Regional System.

6. Monitoring the Regional System with the Ministry in the posture of being a "HELP" centre versus an "ENFORCEMENT" centre.

7. Adherence of the Ministry to a strategy of evolutionary and regular changes to the Regional System to meet changing needs and circumstances...no postures of status quo.

8. Ministry being an up-front advocate of Municipalization...Who else should do this?

The above could be described as the 8 Commendables to the Ministry....Moses already has the tablets and the number 10 cornered. On issues not dealt with previously, the most important comments this reporter can make on the Ministry follow.

In the memory of this reporter, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit has always been a relatively small staffed Ministry. However the basic component of the Ministry, beyond the clerk and secretarial section, is professionally oriented in the fields of: Business Administration; Planning; Finance; Engineering; Policy and Research Analysis; Law; Accountancy; and

Personnel Management. This means that 75% of the Ministry requires the services of people with high-standard academic backgrounds. It is not a Ministry which can operate with personnel who can "come in off the street". Other Ministries require academically trained components but not in the proportion that this Ministry does.

These facts underscore the ability of this Ministry to carry out a "Bridging Role" with other Ministries which has been mentioned in other sections of this Report. It is this "Bridging Role" which should always give the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit a greater significance to Government than mere numbers might suggest. The Ministry should in no sense be considered a "Junior" Ministry within the Provincial Government. By the very nature of its work and mandate it is a political link between Central Government and the Local Government structures of this Province.

It is the opinion of this reporter that, save for the years 1964 to 1972, more recent years have seen the perception of the significance of the Ministry to have been diminished within Government. Between 1972 and 1975, this reporter believes that the Ministry for all practical purposes was relegated to be simply the "hand maiden" for the then Ministry of Lands and Forests. Except for brief "flashes in the sun" this reporter believes the Ministry fared little better in the years 1975 to 1986. It is the expressed hope of this reporter that the next picture will present the Ministry in its properly significant role.

The next significant comments on this Ministry and its relationship with the Regional System is to be found in the analysis of its place in measuring the scale of bureaucratic content that it has. A good dictionary definition of a BUREAUCRAT is one who "follows a narrow, rigid formal routine"...with authority and no imagination.

It is the conclusion of this reporter that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit continues to enjoy and deserve a reputation for not having the above definition applicable to its staff. Bureaucrats, who have a reputation for fitting the above definition, neither serve their Ministry nor the public well. Those, this reporter has always been able to recognize and abhor.

During the course of this survey, all staff of the Ministry responded with technical content, imaginative ideas for new directions and time consuming

paper work requirements for the task at hand. It may come as a surprise to some, who know this reporter, that such judgement calls would be made.

Perhaps the most important conclusion of all, though, is the finding that on the bureaucratic scale the Ministry has no "Bureaucrats" who could be described as self serving. Ministry staff give the term "Bureaucrat" a good name despite the definition.

In another note to the Ministry, this reporter would suggest that it would be good policy to reaffirm the proposition that the Regional System is really a very simple concept, easily described and defined. It can only be made complex if legislation is made to become awkward or imprecise over time. Fundamentally, because it is a Federated System, like all Federal Systems, it requires constant attention and adjustment. It is a Federated System with wide variations in the political comfort levels it has produced. Nevertheless, any abandonment of the federation principle in the view of this reporter would be a sure ticket to chaotic Local Government as we now know it.

Finally, this reporter was struck by the posture of PATIENCE displayed by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs during a visit by this Survey Operation. Goals were certainly set by that Ministry on such politically fragile issues as Annexation, Amalgamation and Municipal Restructuring, for example. However, positive on site-urging, implied Legislative Fiat and on-site studies on such issues were wrapped up in a cloak of time..."patience". The results on these sensitive issues have been impressive. The B.C. Ministry might learn from this example.

Back to this province, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit can be proud of its record in British Columbia. These notes will hopefully be useful in continuing that record.

VII Public Perception

The Regional System has had its bumps by way of public comment since its formative years, 1965 through 1969. It was new and it was unique on the Canadian scene. Rural and Urban British Columbia had little experience with cross - boundary infrastructure. Only the two major urban centres of the Lower Mainland and Greater Victoria had experience with single purpose infrastructural Boards...water and sewer services.

The notion that a multi-service Board could be designed to carry any number of services under the aegis of one Statute was "the new kid" on the block. Most other jurisdictions had a proliferation of Statutes with single purpose intent. The growth of single purpose bureaucracies under a single purpose system was its most undesirable feature and it was a sure road to unnecessary costs over time.

The Regional system has had its greatest success, except for its role in Municipal and Hospital Financing, in the area of delivering what this reporter has called "hardware" services: cross-boundary water supply; sewer systems; recreation facilities; refuse disposal; fire protection; transit; and airport facilities. The Regional system has had its greatest public troubles with the Regulatory side of its operations...Land Use Regulations and Building Regulations. In the case of the former the Regions were often the focus of blame for positions not entirely of their own making...Health, Highways and the Agricultural Land Commission were involved. In the case of the latter most often the problems were the result of lack of uniformity in enforcement of regulations or too sophisticated standards for parts of rural areas.

In any event, public troubles for Regions probably reached their high point in the years 1978 to 1983. Since that time there has been a noticeable decline in the number of complaints received by the Minister and the Ministry. This is likely the result of:

1. Introduction of legislative changes by the Ministry.

2. Regions drawing back from application of urban regulatory standards in rural areas.

3. Modest refinements or fine tuning by the Agricultural Land Commission.

4. Change to the regulatory scene in response to the regional Survey Reports.

5. Caution by the regions in response to various judicial proceedings.

None of this causes this reporter to abandon the conclusion that, when at least 90% of the complaints about the Regional System involve the Regulatory side, there is room for improvement. The complaints on planning, it should be noted, involve not only the public but the operators of the Regional System as well.

This reporter believes that the cause of irritation is largely correctable...Land use regulation is probably the single most constant irritant between the public and local government, with the possible exception of animal control by-laws. The machinery...legislation...is the irritant for Regional Boards. Two recommendations to soften further the complaint picture for the Ministry on the part of both Regional Boards and the Public...

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT RECENT STATUTORY AMENDMENTS TO THE PLANNING SECTIONS OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT BE REVIEWED:

1. CLEANING UP TECHNICAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOLLOWING UPON MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT 1985, CHAPTER 79.

2. CHANGE MUNICIPAL OPTING OUT OF PLANNING COSTS IN ELECTORAL AREAS WHERE MINISTER HAS DESIGNATED A FRINGE AREA IN WHICH A PLANNING PROJECT IS DESIRABLE.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT A SIMPLE APPEAL PROCEDURE BE INTRODUCED TO PERMIT THE INSPECTOR OF MUNICIPALITIES TO REFER BONA-FIDE COMPLAINTS TO AN APPEAL PANEL. THE PANEL COULD BE SOMETHING LIKE A LOW COST COURT OF REVISION WITH THE POWER TO REFER A LAND USE MATTER BACK TO A REGIONAL BOARD, TOGETHER WITH APPROPRIATE OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. THE NOTION WOULD BE A KIND OF "COURT OF LAST RESORT" WITHOUT THE COST IMPLICATIONS INVOLVED WITH JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS.

Another clue to the cause of Public Perception problems for Regional Districts is in the content of the Ministry publication "Statistics Relating to Regional and Municipal Governments in British Columbia".

First, the listing of Functions by Region can give the misleading picture that some Regions are into a plethora of functions when the facts are that many

functions have become moribund or cancelled. This false picture is one of the reasons that the Regional System has faced the accusation that it has become a "growing monster out of control".

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT FUNCTIONS SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM PUBLIC INFORMATION LISTINGS WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER OPERABLE.

A second improvement to this publication would be to include a clearer picture of what the makeup of each Region's Gross Annual Budget really is and the significance of the part played by the big ticket items. This reporter was amazed at the public response to gross budgets presented by Regions. Essentially the response was: "WOW! Do you know that the Regional District of XYZ budget this year was $20,000,000, or whatever?" This response implies that the thought is abroad that Gross Budget figures are equated with the notion that they are the result of the costs attributable to a bloated bureaucracy, rather than to the straight-line costs of works and services delivered to benefiting areas, at their request, and with their consent to the terms and conditions involved. This is indeed a false impression. Measured against the programs with which they are involved, Regions have generally low administrative overhead costs. The big ticket content of gross Budgets are in the main:

1. General Government and Legislation.

2. Municipal Finance Authority.

3. Hospital Requisitions.

4. Sewer and Water Requisitions.

5. Recreation and Parks Requisitions.

6. Community Health Requisitions (Capital Region only).

7. All other Local Works and Service Requisitions.

Obviously, the above, are essentially main-line costs for benefits received by a member area of a Region...not bureaucratic overhead cost. Therefore...

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL REGIONS BREAK DOWN GROSS BUDGET FIGURES INTO STANDARD CATEGORIES FOR THE ANNUAL PRESENTATION TO THE PUBLIC AND BE INCLUDED

IN SUCH FORM IN THE MINISTRY PUBLICATION, "STATISTICS RELATING TO REGIONAL AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA".

In other words, it should be made clear that whatever a Regional Gross Budget turns out to be, it represents the product of the consent process from the participating areas which get the Bill for the delivery of those works and services. It is not the consequence of actions initiated by the Regional Boards themselves.

Except for the rather more technical causes of public perception problems listed above there remains a number of other rather more politically philosophical issues. The RURAL vs URBAN content of the problem will only diminish over time. It is really the product of the historical discomfort that has existed between rural and urban organized British Columbia from day one. It is the judgment of this reporter that this basically is a "them and us" syndrome, which, first, is not exclusive to this Province and, second, has in fact diminished as the value of cross-boundary institutions has been proven ...again over time. It has particularly diminished where the idea of federating "Rural" and "Urban" British Columbia has taken hold...and it has in large measure.

Because British Columbia's area is still about 98% to 2%, Rural vs Urban, it is still important to recognize federation concepts in the development of local governmental infrastructure. The Regional System has displayed some measure of success in that direction. Most of the failure areas on this score are the product now of only personality conflicts or historical grievances akin to the problems experienced by the Hatfields and the McCoys.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE MINISTRY SHOULD CONTINUE ITS EFFORT TO ELIMINATE ANY FRICTIONS BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE U.B.C.M. SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR ADOPTING THE FEDERATION THEME AT ITS CONVENTIONS AS WELL AS IN THE MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE UNION.

Mention has already been made about public perception problems created by lack of clarity from the Province on the definition of roles the Regional System is expected to perform in terms of short and longer range public policy. It is the opinion of this reporter that such lack of clarity is the fundamental cause of most public perception problems faced by the Regions. It is also the root cause for most of the political discomfort problems this reporter

discovered in the System. Defence of public policy with respect to local Government roles is, in the opinion of this reporter, the primary responsibility the Ministry and the Minister owes to the Legislature and to the Public at large. Without that, any System falls victim to uncertainty and lack of clearly stated purpose.

Many Regions suffer public perception problems because they lack focused public relations programs to highlight sometimes very good achievements. In effect some make no attempt at all to "run their own flag up their own flagpole". Public relations programs need not be lavish or expensive. Directors, for example, are already paid and should be able to present Regional achievements during regularly held stewardship reports around the Region. Press briefings for Community newspapers to ensure local editors know exactly what a Region is doing well are not expensive.

Finally, on the public perception side, this reporter believes that public perception problems greatly increase when dramatic revolutionary changes are proposed for either the geographic infrastructure of local government or in the content of local government roles. This is particularly a truism if there is any element of unilateralism involved with such changes. For example, annexations, amalgamations, role changes, incorporations or other boundary adjustments for or to existing geographic local governmental infrastructures have proven to be a political minefield for successive Provincial Governments here and across this Country.

The Municipal world seems to respond well to evolution and not revolution. Gradualism appears to be the only way to go. The major components of "Gradualism" are, of course: patience; time; joint study; and consultation.

* IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF THIS PROVINCE OPT FOR THE EVOLUTIONARY AND CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES FOR DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIPS WHICH SHOULD EXIST BETWEEN THE PROVINCE AND ITS LOCAL GOVERNMENT CREATURES, BEING EVER MINDFUL OF THE FINAL CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY THE PROVINCE AND THE MINISTER HAVE FOR THE FORM, SHAPE AND ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT .

VIII Summary

The Regional System has served British Columbia well, despite some of the glitches and shortcomings spelled out in this Summary Report. There is no doubt that British Columbia needed some kind of cross-boundary local government machinery in 1965 and still does.

All Provinces have some form of cross-boundary machinery. Some have little of the FEDERATION concept involved with their local Government designs. Those which do not have experienced friction between their municipally incorporated units and non-municipal areas when solutions for cross-boundary problems are sought.

Ontario has the model which bears the closest resemblance to the British Columbia scene...the big difference, although the result is similar, is the fact that each Ontario Region has been established by a separate Act of the Legislature. Furthermore, for some of these Regions social welfare, public health, regional planning, transit, and policing costs are part of their functional load, offset by Provincial Grants to some extent. Finally most of Northern Ontario has not been regionalized, but in Ontario by far most of the population lives under a Regional umbrella.

This Summary Report should also be viewed in the context of the 28 individual reports prepared and delivered where site specific glitches and shortcomings have been noted. It should be viewed as well against the suggestions for reform made at the 8 Regional District Forums held in different parts of the Province during the consultative process which has dominated the entire course of this Review. For all practical purposes this review reaches only four major conclusions.

1. There is a need for closer liason between the Regions and the Ministry.

2. There is a need for clear and consistent statements of public policy with respect to Regions.

3. There is a need for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit to be clearly designated as the "Bridging Clearing House" between the Regions and all other ministries of the Provincial Government.

4. There is a need for legislative reform to ensure: fiscal accountability and flexibility; precise role definition; and simplicity of process and administrative procedures.

Most, if not all, of the other suggestions and notions of this Report will naturally flow from the attention given to the four NEEDS given above.

The climate for any and all changes has never been better in the experience of this reporter. The public clearly has displayed a wish for greater clarity in the presentation of: "what" Regions are expected to do; "how" Regions are expected to carry out their role; and "why" Regions are the chosen machinery to carry forward the FEDERATION concept, which this reporter feels is fundamental to the maintenance of relative serenity within the Local Governmental Community.

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities and those within the Regional System, as it currently stands, have by their participation in this study clearly demonstrated their commitment to seek reforms to the Regional System through the consultative process. They should not be denied any opportunities to deliver on that commitment now or in the future.

Finally, this reporter must record thanks to all who participated in the processes of this Report and above all to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Transit.